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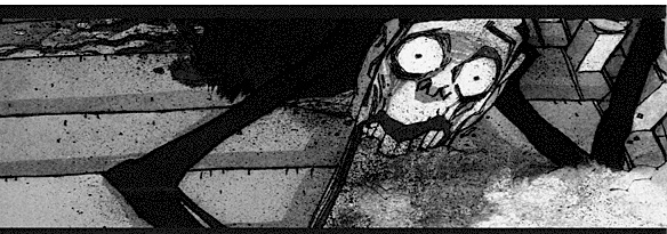
CLIVE BARKER



THE THIEF OF ALWAYS
BOOK THREE™

CLIVE BARKER'S
THE THIEF OF ALWAYS™





Clive Barker's
The Thief of Always

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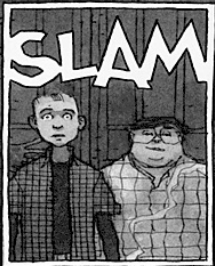
www.idwpublishing.com

ISBN: 1-932382-76-3
08 07 06 05 1 2 3 4 5

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GREAT
TO HAVE
YOU BACK, BOY.
I TOLD EVERYONE
YOU WOULDN'T
BE ABLE TO STAY
AWAY. NOBODY
BELIEVED ME.
HE'S GONE,
THEY SAID.

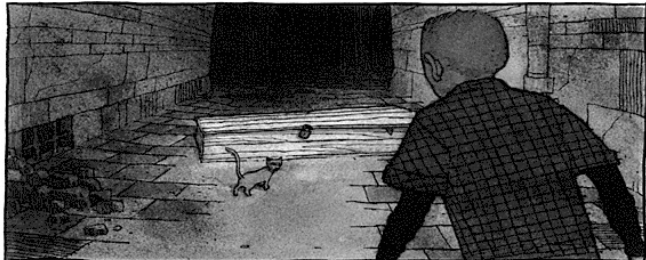
BUT
I KNEW
BETTER.



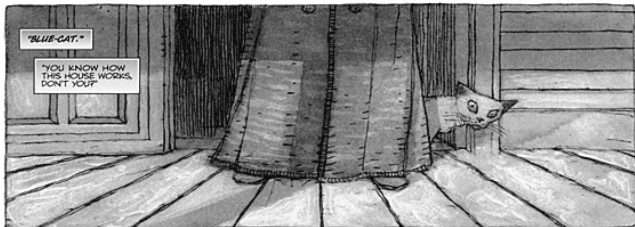




WHERE
ARE YOU
TAKING ME,
BLUE-CAT?







"BLUE-CAT."

"YOU KNOW HOW
THIS HOUSE WORKS,
DON'T YOU?"



IT GIVES
YOU WHATEVER
YOU THINK YOU
WANT.

AND I
WANTED A CAT...
AND ANOTHER
FATHER. I HEARD
HOOD'S VOICE
THAT NIGHT.

WHERE?



IN THE
ATTIC, HE SAID:
IF YOU STAY HERE,
FOREVER AND
EVER, YOU'LL
NEVER DIE.

I'VE SEEN
TOO MUCH,
HARVEY. TOO
MANY SEASONS,
TOO MANY
CHILDREN.



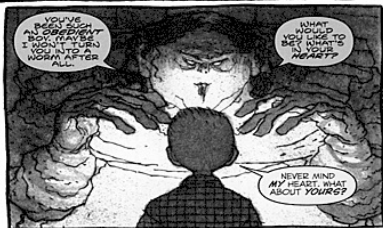
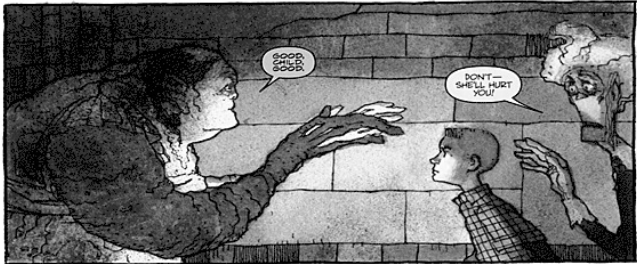
WHY DIDN'T
YOU TRY TO
STOP HIM?

I HAVE
NO POWER
AGAINST HIM. ALL I
COULD DO WAS GIVE
THE CHILDREN WHO
CAME HERE AS MUCH
HAPPINESS AS I
KNEW HOW.



IT'D WELCOME
DEATH NOW. LIKE A
FRIEND I'D DRIVEN
AWAY FROM MY DOOR.
BUT HOOD WON'T LET
ME—NOT EVER. THAT'S
HIS REVENGE ON ME
FOR HELPING YOU
ESCAPE.









YOU'RE A MURDERER NOW, DO YOU LIKE THE FEEL OF MARE'S BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS?

HE DIDN'T KILL HER— SHE WAS NEVER ALIVE, NONE OF YOU ARE.



WHAT ARE WE THEN?

ILLUSIONS, ALL ILLUSIONS.



HAHA HAHA!

YOU! YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING, BUT YOU DON'T KNOW MR. HOOD.

WHAT'S SO FUNNY?



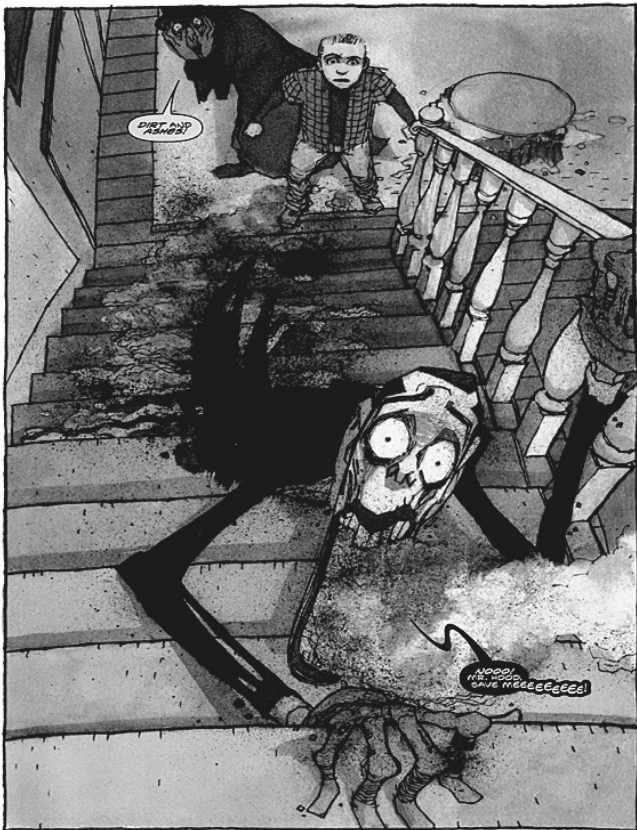
I WILL IN A LITTLE WHILE.

I COULD SUCK OUT YOUR BRAINS THROUGH YOUR EARS, YOU KNOW.

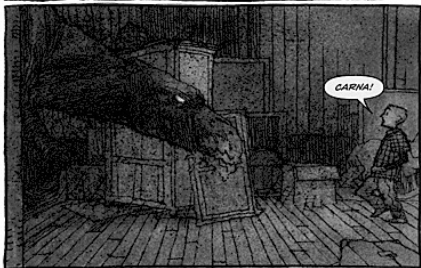


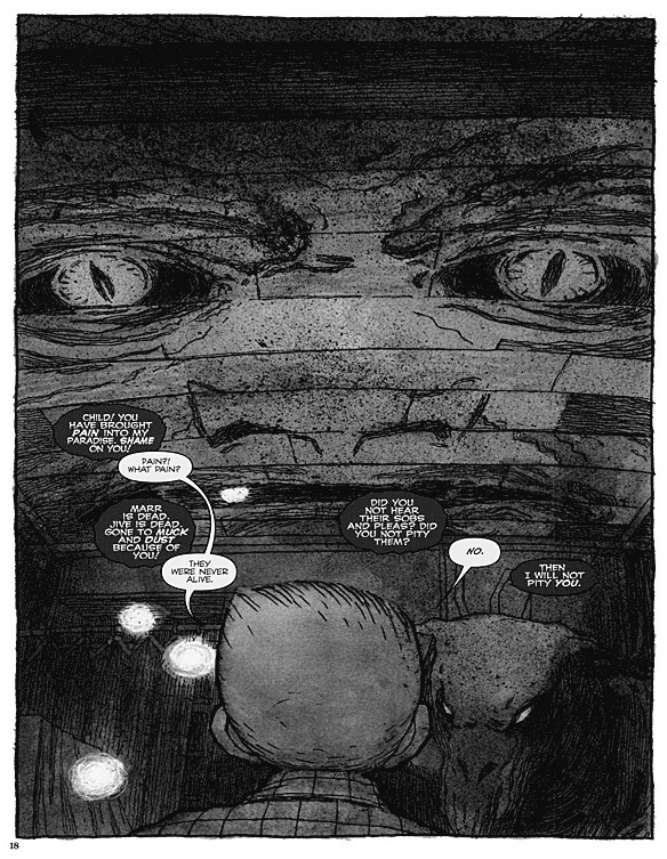
MAYBE YOU COULD, BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO... BECAUSE I'VE GOT AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR MASTER.











CHILD! YOU
HAVE BROUGHT
PAIN INTO MY
PARADISE. SHAME
ON YOU!

PAINT!
WHAT PAIN?

MARR
IS DEAD.
JIVE IS DEAD.
GONE TO MUCK
AND DUST
BECAUSE OF
YOU!

THEY
WERE NEVER
ALIVE.

DID YOU
NOT HEAR
THEIR SOBS
AND PLEASE? DID
YOU NOT PITY
THEM?

NO.

THEN
I WILL NOT
PITY YOU.



SUCH
A SHAME,
THOUGH. WHY
NOT COME BACK
AND LIVE HERE
PEACEFULLY?

YOU STOLE
THIRTY YEARS OF
TIME FROM ME!

I ONLY
TOOK THE
DAYS YOU
DIDN'T WANT—
WHERE'S THE
CRIME IN
THAT?

I DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT I
WAS LOSING.



AM, BUT
ISN'T THAT
ALWAYS THE
WAY? GONE IS
GONE, HARVEY
SWICK.

NO!
WHAT YOU
STOLE I
CAN STEAL
BACK!



YOUR SOUL
BURNS BRIGHT,
BRIGHTER THAN ANY
OTHER I'VE KNOWN.
I UNDERSTAND NOW
WHY YOU'VE COME
BACK...

YOU KNEW YOU'D
FIND A HOME HERE.
WE'RE BOTH *THIEVES*.
HARVEY, I TAKE TIME.
YOU TAKE LIVES. BUT
IN THE END WE'RE THE
SAME BOTH *THIEVES*
OF ALWAYS.



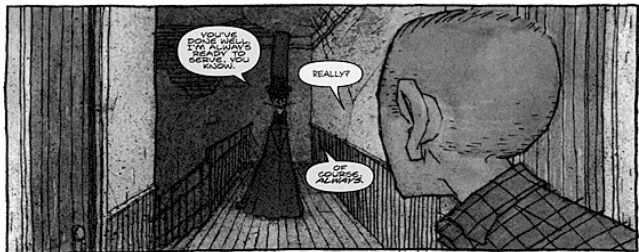
PERHAPS
WE NEEDN'T BE
ENEMIES. I CAN
NURTURE YOU. HELP
YOU BETTER
UNDERSTAND THE
DARK PATHS.

SO I'LL END
UP FEEDING ON
CHILDREN LIKE YOU?
NO THANKS. I DON'T
WANT TO STAY HERE.
I JUST WANT TO GET
WHAT'S MINE AND
LEAVE.

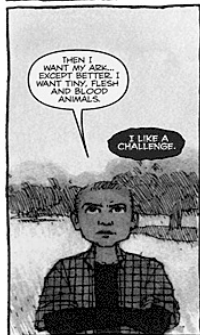


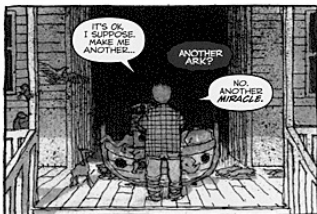
SO VERY
SAD, BUT IF
YOU WILL HAVE
WHAT'S YOURS,
HAVE DEATH!



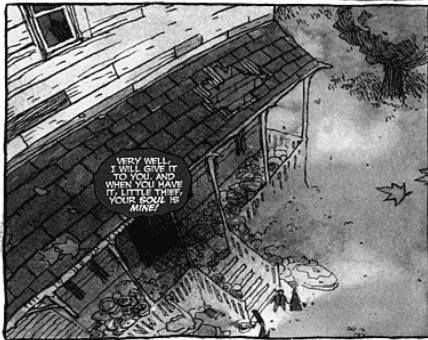










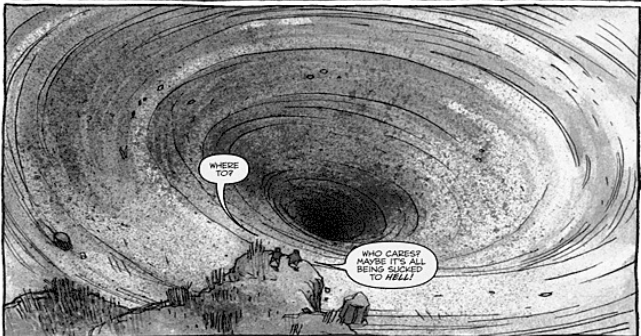
















SO, THIEF,
YOU SEE ME AS
THE MAN I WAS
OR RATHER, AS A
COPY OF THAT MAN.
IS IT WHAT YOU
EXPECTED?





YES,
IT'S **EXACTLY**
WHAT I EXPECTED.
YOU'RE DIRT AND
MUCK AND BITS AND
PIECES. YOU'RE
NOTHING!



NOTHING, AM
I? I'LL SHOW
YOU, THIEF—
I'LL SHOW YOU
WHAT I AM.

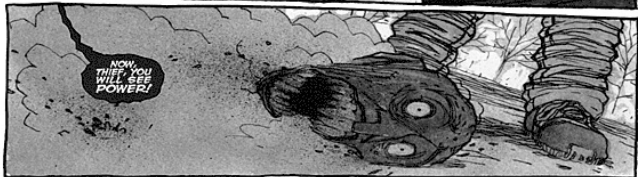


LET
ME **SEE** HIM
FOR YOU.
YOU NEEDN'T
BOTHER.
I'LL DO IT!

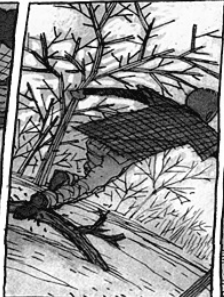
YOU? YOU
BROUGHT HIM
HERE. YOU'RE
TO BLAME!



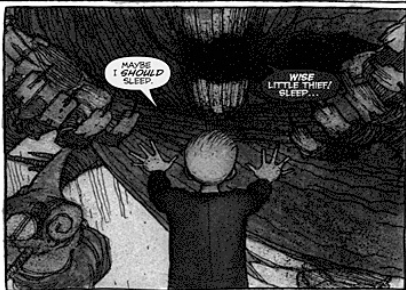
SSSSHHHHRRRRPPPP

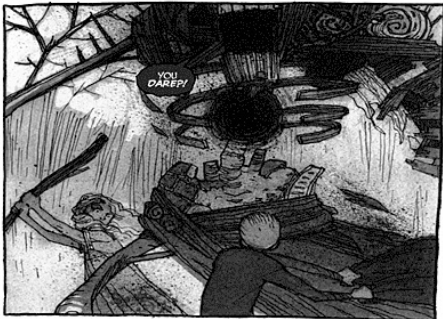
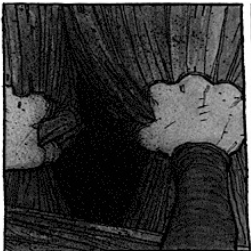


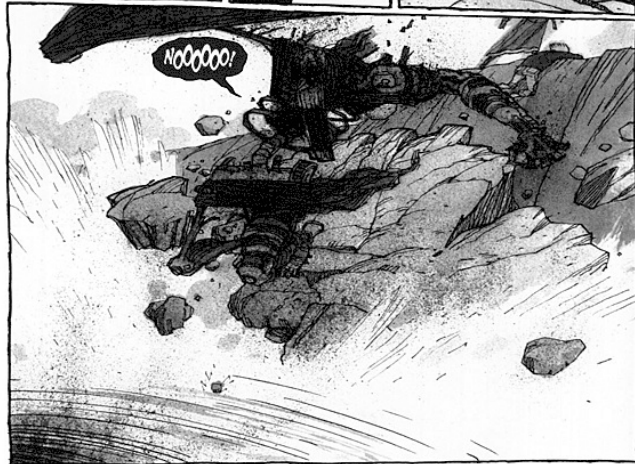
NOW,
THIEF, YOU
WILL **SEE**
POWER!















Soon the freed children
gather at the mist wall...

SAY
SOMETHING,
HARVEY.

WHY?

BECAUSE
YOU'RE A
HERO!

WE'RE FREE
BECAUSE OF
YOU, HARVEY.

EVERYONE,
I JUST WANT TO
SAY... LET'S MAKE
SURE WE DON'T
GROW UP AND
FORGET ABOUT
BEING HERE.

LET'S REMIND
OURSELVES EVERY
MORNING, MAKE
A STORY OUT OF IT
TO TELL EVERYONE
WE MEET.

THEY WON'T
BELIEVE US!

THAT DOESN'T
MATTER. *WE'LL* KNOW
IT'S TRUE, AND THAT'S
WHAT COUNTS.

IF TIME
REALLY IS
SET TO RIGHTS,
I'M GOING BACK
A FEW MORE
YEARS THAN
YOU.

AND IN
THE YEAR THAT'S
WAITING FOR ME,
YOU HAVEN'T EVEN
BORN.

NOW
LET'S GO
HOME.

I GUESS
WE DO HAVE
ONE THING TO
THANK HOOD FOR—
WE WERE CHILDREN
TOGETHER, AT LEAST
FOR A LITTLE
WHILE.

LET'S GO
TOGETHER
AS FAR AS
WE CAN.

With his friends, and Holiday House, having faded, Harvey joyfully returned home to the embrace of his parents. He'd succeeded in stealing the years back from Hood after all.



But his parents had questions, questions with answers that were hard to believe. Only a trip to the site of Mr. Hood's wail could convince them.



IT WAS
RIGHT HERE,
I SWEAR!



IT'S
ALL TRUE.
YOU SHOULD
TRUST YOUR BOY—
I HAVE IT ON THE
BEST AUTHORITY
THAT HE'S A
HERO.

YOU WERE
ONE OF HOOD'S
PRISONERS?

NOT ME—
HER.

LULU!



DON'T,
PLEASE, SHE
SENT ME IN
HER PLACE—SHE
WANTS YOU TO
REMEMBER
HER AS SHE
WAS.

WELL, HARVEY,
IT SEEMS YOUR
MR. HOOD EXISTED
AFTER ALL.



The days that followed were unlike any Harvey had ever known. Time would be precious from now on, and he resolved to fill every moment with the seasons he'd found in his heart: hopes like birds on a spring branch; happiness like a warm summer sun; magic like the rising mists of autumn. And best of all, love; love enough for a thousand Christmases.

The End.

a n i n t e r v i e w w i t h

BARKER

First of all, can you tell us a bit about the genesis of *The Thief of Always*? What made you want to craft a novel aimed at a younger readership than your usual work?

Clive: This is way before Harry Potter and the re-emergence of fiction for the younger audience being so big, and I certainly did it because I wanted to tell this particular story. The story had occurred to me a while ago and I'd written it down in a short form called "The Holiday House" and I showed it to my agent, who wasn't particularly eager about it, so I went into a corner and just did it, because it was a story I wanted to write. Sometimes you've just got to do what you've got to do! It took about three months to write, probably another couple months to do fixes on, and then I gave it to HarperCollins and said "I realize you're taking a huge risk with this, because here's a children's book coming from Clive Barker, and maybe nobody will buy it! So I'll sell it to you for a dollar." Actually, they ended up giving me a silver dollar for it. And I did the illustrations, and the thing went from there. It has since turned out to be a very successful book. It's in a lot of languages around the world and it's being taught in a lot of schools now, which is fun. I think we're at 1.5 million copies in print in America, so it wasn't bad for a book that cost them a dollar.

Was your approach to writing *The Thief of Always* any different due to the fact that you were writing for a younger audience?

Clive: No, I mean there are things you obviously can't do—you're not going to do any sexy scenes, you're not going to do

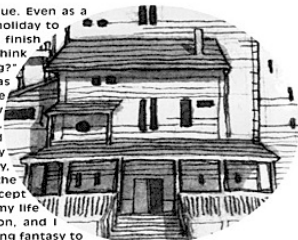
any scenes that are very violent, you're not going to use any cuss words. But storytelling's storytelling. I wanted to keep the chapters reasonably short, because I remember as a young reader I liked short chapters, but I was drawn along by the energy of the storytelling. I didn't at any point really think "Gee, I shouldn't do that." I don't think there was anywhere in the story that I worried about content—it was a story that told itself, and it was a real pleasure to write.

Regarding the characters, is there a lot of Harvey Swick in you? Did you base any of the characters on childhood acquaintances?

Clive: It's me, it's me—it's the bored child. But I think it's every child. I think we, all of us, as children feel bored a lot of the time, waiting for adults to do whatever adults do. It's definitely less true now, but as a kid I didn't have those diversions. So there was a lot of downtime, time where you were just waiting. I used to do a lot of reading, but even reading can't take you away all the time, away from the gray reality of life in Liverpool in the '50s, which is where I was brought up, and I wanted to reflect that in Harvey. I also wanted to give Harvey some of my imaginative energy. So, yeah, I think there's something of Harvey in me.

Was the story of Holiday House based on a childhood daydream of your own, or something that occurred to you in adulthood?

Clive: It really came out of the blue. Even as a kid, I was aware that I lived from holiday to holiday. Every kid does that—you finish your summer holidays, and you think "Oh, how long is it to Thanksgiving?" (in America—in England, it was Bonfire Night) And then on Bonfire Night you thought, "OK, well, how long is it until Christmas?" I mean, you're constantly saying that. And my mother would be constantly saying "Don't wish your life away, don't wish your life away." But the story wasn't based on anything except that there were a lot of times in my life when I wished more was going on, and I thought this would be an interesting fantasy to play with.



Did the basic story of the novel change at all while you were writing it? Were there any scenes or characters that didn't make the final cut?

Clive: Not that I remember. It was a neat writing experience, in the sense that I really knew what the narrative was going to be. I laid it out in chapters before writing it. I laid out what I thought the action was going to be. I had a really clear sense of it. I wish novels were always this easy, but they're not. But of all the things I've written, this was probably the simplest process.

The novel is set in a timeless era that could be taken to be anything from the 1950s to the present time. Was this a conscious decision on your part?

Clive: Yeah, I like to do that—not only the stuff for younger readers, but with all of my fiction. I don't like to be too specific about time periods. Let's make a study in contrasts: Steve—Steve King—is brilliant at using brand names and songs and particular time indicators in his stories to make you feel "Oh, I was there. I know what it feels like to listen to Bob Dylan" or Metallica, or whatever it is. I tend to go in the opposite direction. Almost nowhere in my novels will you find references to specific products. Unless it's really necessary, I don't even feel it's vital to tell you when the date is. If a story works, a story works. I think Harvey's world and Harvey's problem and challenge—both his boredom and his desire to fight back against the man who took time from him—those are universal ideas, and, in principle therefore, the book should be readable without any indicators as to the time period.

I know your paintings serve as inspiration for your *Abarat* book series... with certain editions of *The Thief of Always* novel also featuring your own art, was this a method of inspiration you used on this project as well?

Clive: It wasn't. It was completely the reverse. I did the entire story and then they said, "Why don't you do illustrations for it as well?" So it was the Publisher's suggestion. I thought it was a cool idea. I'd done the *Books of Blood* covers for the limited edition, so they knew I did artwork and so I thought, "Hey, why not?" And now, the *Abarat* experience is completely the reverse—I'm up to five hundred paintings here.

One of the most entertaining aspects of the story is the quartet of Hood flunkies: Carna, Jive, Rictus, and Marr. Any favorites among these? Why?

Clive: They are four faces of darkness, aren't they? The thing that smiles and won't stop smiling, the monster—Carna, the strange witch-thing which appears from nothing, and this strange little servant who's almost like the guy from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. And my idea was that I'm going to have these four spooky characters—and they're not going to be scary scary—but they're going to be spooky in a way that the audience will really enjoy. My favorite is Rictus. It was really fun to write Rictus—I mean, he's a used car salesman! There's something wonderfully sleazy about him.

With the success of *The Thief of Always*, is there any possibility that we will ever see further adventures of Harvey Swick?

Clive: I didn't have any plans. Every now and then I think of something, and I think maybe there's going to be a follow-up. It needs to be completely right or I won't do it. The thing about *The Thief of Always* is that it stands on its own beautifully. So if I am going to open up the narrative again there needs to be a really

good reason to do it. The story has got to present itself in a way where I go, "Oh yeah, that's right. That's the story I need to tell." And, to be perfectly honest, I haven't found that story yet. Which isn't to say I won't find it at some point in the future, but right now I'm content to let *The Thief of Always* be its own sweet self.

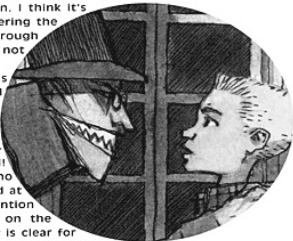
What is your opinion of Gabriel Hernandez's artwork on the adaptation? Specifically, what do you think of the look that he imagined for each of the principal characters?

Clive: For me, the fun thing of doing a comic version is to see what other people do with it. So, for me, the fact that all the characters have been recreated is the best fun imaginable. I'm not one of those guys who really clings to things and says that it has to be this way or it's wrong. You know, we're going to make a movie of this pretty soon, and the man who's directing it—Kelly Ashbury—co-directed *Shrek 2*. He's a very smart guy, and I know he's going to be making Kelly's version of *The Thief of Always*, and you guys are doing your version. I think it's wonderful. For me, it's like rediscovering the book, like discovering the book through someone else's eyes, and that could not be a better experience.

The nice thing about a writer's life is that you also get to let them go, and when you let them go you then move on to the next thing. I never had a problem with letting things go. I love artists. Art is a very hard thing to do—painting and writing, they're hard! And so I admire endlessly people who get into this business and work hard at it, and I think the care and the attention and the love that's been lavished on the comic edition of *The Thief of Always* is clear for everybody to see. So it's a real pleasure to pick it up and say, "Wow! Look at that!" Some of those big spreads—like when you first see the interior of the house, for instance—are just fantastic, beautifully drawn!

Are there any more of your novels that you think would be well-suited to the comic format?

Clive: Oh yeah, yeah. I'm hoping we all get to work on *The Great and Secret Show* and *Everville*. I'd love *Sacrament* as a comic project. I mean, you know how much I love comics. They've always been a part of my life. I'm sitting here in my library surrounded by books and comics! And painting and image-making has always been a part of my life, so it's definitely something I want to be doing with you guys again, as soon as possible.



R A D I O K I T

CLIVE BARKER'S THE THIEF OF ALWAYS™



The magical environs of Mr. Hood's Holiday House hold all the treats and wonders any child could imagine... but they also trap the unfortunate souls inside for eternity. When Harvey Swick discovers Holiday House's secret, he escapes into a world in which time has sped by without him. Now he must plunge inside once again to regain what's been taken from him.

IDW's beautifully illustrated adaptation of Clive Barker's whimsical novel concludes here!



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ISBN 153238276-3



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